

Classic Poetry Series

Erik Johan Stagnelius

- poems -

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Friend In The Desolate Time

Friend, in the desolate time, when your soul is enshrouded in darkness
When, in a deep abyss, memory and feeling die out,
Intellect timidly gropes among shadowy forms and illusions
Heart can no longer sigh, eye is unable to weep;
When, from your night-clouded soul the wings of fire have fallen
And you, to nothing, afraid, feel yourself sinking once more,
Say, who rescues you then?—Who is the comforting angel
Brings to your innermost soul order and beauty again,
Building once more your fragmented world, restoring the fallen
Altar, and when it is raised, lighting the sacred flame?—
None but the powerful being who first from the limitless darkness
Kissed to life seraphs and woke numberless suns to their dance.
None but the holy Word who called the worlds into existence
And in whose power the worlds move on their paths to this day.
Therefore, rejoice, oh friend, and sing in the darkness of sorrow:
Night is the mother of day, Chaos the neighbor of God.

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Nacken - Water Demon

The evening is festooned with golden clouds
the fairies dance in the meadow
and the leaf-crowned Nacken
plays his fiddle in the silvery brook.
Little boy in the brush on the bank
resting in the violet vapor
hears the noise from the chilly water
calls out in the still night.

"Poor old fellow, why do you play?
will it take the pain away?
you bring the woods and the fields to life
but you'll never be a child of God.

Paradise's moonlit nights
eden's flower-crowned plains
angels of the light on high--
never to be beheld by your eye."

Tears stream down the old man's face
down he dives into the rapids
the fiddle silences.
And the Nacken will never
play again in the silvery brook.

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O Camp Of Flowers

O camp of flowers, with poplars girdled round,
Gray guardians of life's soft and purple bud!
O silver spring, beside whose brimming flood
My pensive childhood its Elysium found!
O happy hours by love and fancy crowned,
Whose horn of plenty flatteringly subdued
My heart into a trance, whence, with a rude
And horrid blast, fate came my soul to hound!
Who was the goddess that empowered you all
Thus to bewitch me? Out of wasting snow
And lily-leaves her head-dress should be made!
Weep, my poor lute! nor on Astraea call,
She will not smile, nor I, who mourn below,
Till I, a shade in heaven, clasp her, a shade.

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